



SELECTING LIFE JACKETS FOR CHILDREN



A personal flotation device (PFD), or life jacket, can keep your child afloat and keep them warm in cold water. Drowning can occur in less than a minute, without noise, and often happens even when an adult is nearby.



What do you look for when choosing a life jacket?

- The U.S. Coast Guard approval number on the life jacket—this means the jacket meets specific criteria for performance and design.
- Check the size and weight limits on the label. Try the life jacket on the child. Check for proper fit by lifting the life jacket at the shoulders. If there is more than three inches between the child's shoulders and the life jacket, it is too big! If the life jacket lifts up to cover the child's mouth or ears, it is too big!
- A head support collar is important for small children. It supports their head when in the water and a loop on the collar allows for grabbing and lifting a child from the water.
- Small children must have a crotch strap that promotes a snug fit. The strap should be used at all times to help keep the life jacket in place.
- For older children, it is important to consider comfort and appearance. Let the child participate in the selection of their life jacket. Put their name on it.
- After selection is made, have the child test the life jacket in a pool. This gives you a chance to observe the fit and performance of the life jacket in water, and gives your child a chance to become comfortable with their life jacket. Teach your child how to swim on their back while wearing the life jacket.

